

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6566
INFO USDEL MBFR VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 1115

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, US
SUBJ: MBFR

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B. MOSCOW 1114

1. DURING MY LONG TALK WITH KUZNETSOV JANUARY 24, HE EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THUS FAR NO PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN THE MBFR TALKS. THE MAIN REASON FOR THIS, HE SAID, IS THAT THE WESTERN POWERS DO NOT WISH TO BASE THEIR PROPOSALS ON THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL SECURITY. THEY WANT A REDUCTION WHICH WOULD UNDERMINE THE SECURITY OF THE OTHER SIDE. IF THE WEST STICKS TO THIS POSITION, KUZNETSOV SAID, THERE WILL NEVER BE PROGRESS IN VIENNA.

2. THE RECENT SOVIET PROPOSAL TO FREEZE THE LEVEL OF TROOPS IN THE TREATY AREA DURING THE COURSE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WAS A FORWARD STEP, KUZNETSOV CONTINUED. WE DO NOT KNOW WHY THE WEST WILL NOT AGREE TO IT, HE SAID. WE PROPOSED A REDUCTION OF 20,000 TROOPS FROM EACH SIDE. THE RESPONSE, HOWEVER, WAS NEGATIVE TO THIS AS WELL. SUCH NEGATIVISM RAISES THE QUESTION IN OUR MINDS AS TO WHETHER THE WEST REALLY WANTS CONSTRUCTIVE AND PRACTICAL STEPS ON FORCE REDUCTIONS. WE MADE PROPOSALS ON
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MBFR 20 YEARS AGO, HE SAID. THE WEST FINALLY MADE

COUNTERPROPOSALS, BUT NOW THAT THE SOVIETS ARE READY FOR REAL SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS, THE WEST SEEMS TO RUN AWAY FROM IT. THE SECURITY OF BOTH SIDES SHOULD BE EQUAL, HE ASSERTED. ANY ATTEMPT TO USE "ASYMMETRY" TO WEAKEN OUR POSITION IS NOT ACCEPTABLE. "WE ARE READY TO DO BUSINESS," HE SAID, BUT WE ARE WAITING FOR CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS FROM THE WEST.

3. I REPLIED THAT THERE SEEMS TO BE A DIFFERENCE OF PERCEPTION OF THIS QUESTION. WHILE WE AGREE THAT THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF BOTH SIDES SHOULD BE EQUAL AND THAT ANY MBFR AGREEMENT SHOULD PROTECT SUCH SECURITY, WE SEE THE PREPONDERANCE OF FORCE CLEARLY ON THE SIDE OF THE USSR AND WARSAW PACT. THERE IS AN EXISTING IMBALANCE OF FORCES IN OUR VIEW. WE WOULD THEREFORE WISH TO ACHIEVE A COMMON CEILING SO THAT REAL BALANCE COULD BE ACHIEVED. PROGRESS HAD TAKEN PLACE IN THE LAST ROUND, I SAID, IN THAT THE EASTERN SIDE AGREED TO INITIAL REDUCTIONS BY THE U.S. AND THE USSR. WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH REDUCTIONS COULD BE LINKED TO SECOND PHASE REDUCTIONS OF OTHER PARTICIPANTS. WE FELT THAT WE HAD MADE USEFUL SUGGESTIONS IN THIS REGARD, I SAID, AND WE HOPE THAT PROGRESS CAN BE MADE ON THE NEXT ROUND.

4. KUZNETSOV REPLIED THAT THE SOVIETS WERE ALL FOR MAKING CONSTRUCTIVE STEPS. HOWEVER, THE WESTERN POWERS REFUSE TO TALK TO ANYTHING OTHER THAN GROUND FORCES. OTHER FORCES MUST BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AS WELL, INCLUDING AIRCRAFT AND OTHER EQUIPMENT. REFUSAL TO DO SO CREATES ANXIETY AND CONCERN. THE NATURAL QUESTION THEN ARISES AS TO WHY THE WEST SHOULD WANT TO LIMIT REDUCTIONS ONLY TO GROUND FORCES. THE SITUATION IN EUROPE IS, AFTER ALL, MOVING TOWARD DETENTE, EXCEPT FOR CYPRUS WHERE "NATO HAS BEEN ACTING UP." (I INTERJECTED A VIGOROUS DENIAL OF NATO'S CULPABILITY IN THIS REGARD.) THE QUESTION IS ALSO RAISED IN OUR MINDS AS TO WHY IN SUCH CONDITIONS THE WESTERN SIDE WANTS TO INCREASE ITS STRENGTH RELATIVE TO OUR OWN. AT PRESENT WE HAVE BALANCED FORCES IN

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CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE ARMED FORCES ON BOTH SIDES PROVIDE EQUAL SECURITY. IT SEEMS TO US THAT THE POSITION OF THE WESTERN POWERS IS UNREASONABLE IN THAT IT IS NOT BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL SECURITY. HOW CAN IT BE EXPECTED, HE ASKED RHETORICALLY, THAT WE WILL TAKE STEPS TO UNDERMINE OUR OWN SECURITY? AS WITH CSCE, OUR DELEGATION IN VIENNA HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO TAKE VIGOROUS

STEPS TO REACH A SETTLEMENT, KUZNETSOV SAID.

5. IN REPLY I STATED THAT IN THE PAST THE WEST HAD NOT FELT SECURE IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND BELIEVED RATHER THAT A HEAVY IMBALANCE EXISTED. THE WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES FEEL THAT THEIR NUMBERS ARE BARELY ADEQUATE. ANY REDUCTION THAT WOULD PERPETUATE THE PRESENT IMBALANCE OF FORCES WOULD MAKE THE SITUATION EVEN MORE DANGEROUS IN THEIR VIEW.

6. KUZNETSOV SAID THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO BELABOR THE POINT, BUT THAT HE FELT THE WESTERN SIDE HAD NO CASE IN THIS REGARD. IT SEEMED TO BE INVENTING ARGUMENTS TO DIVERT CONSIDERATION FROM ANY REAL REDUCTION OF FORCES. THE U.S. AND THE USSR SHOULD WORK TOGETHER, KUZNETSOV ASSERTED, AND AGREE ON BASIC PRINCIPLES AND THEN OUR DELEGATIONS IN VIENNA SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO REACH OVERALL AGREEMENT.

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH I WOULD HESITATE TO ASSIGN ANY SPECIAL MEANING TO IT, I FOUND IT INTERESTING THAT IN A LENGTHY EXPOSITION OF THE SOVIET POSITION ON MBFR, KUZNETSOV MADE NO MENTION AT ALL OF THE BUNDESWEHR. STOESEL

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